THE CYBERPUNK BOOK CLUB

TCBC #002 by Ronin Vektor Free

<Culture & Society>

Gore Porn and Soccer Moms

It was late, and I'd been drinking. Ask any serious writer – they'll tell you that's prime time to get some work done. So I pulled up ChatGPT because, as usual something about society was pissing me off.

I used to work at a theater. Shitty job. Shittier pay. No benefits beyond free movies – unless you count heart problems and diabetes courtesy of butter-drenched popcorn and endless fountain drinks.

Anyway, one day Mrs. Suburban Soccer Mom strolls up to the ticket booth. Her 2.5 kids want to see the latest Hollywood regurgitation – **Rollerball**, starring Chris Klein and LL Cool J. But before she agrees, she's got a life-or-death question:

"Is there any nudity in it?"

I hadn't seen it, so I gave her an honest answer. "I don't think so," I said. "But I've heard it's pretty violent."

"I don't care about that," she scoffed, then bought the tickets and herded the kids off before they could beg her for snacks.

Turns out I was wrong about the nudity. But I don't feel bad. The tits are the only thing worth watching in that piece of shit anyway.

So there I was, half-drunk, when the memory of Mrs. Suburban Soccer Mom came rushing back. I started started ruminating on her total indifference to bloody violence – so long as her kids didn't catch a glimpse of a naked body. And that got me thinking about my own childhood.

I grew up on **Black Belt Theater** and **Nightmare Theater**. Every Saturday at noon, I'd tune into WNUV-TV 54 for the week's action flick. Then at two, it was whatever horror movie they had lined up. Before each one, a message would flash sometimes: "Edited for time and content."

God, I miss those days. Wake up, scarf down a bowl of cereal, rush through chores, then sink into hours of Saturday morning cartoons. After **The Smurfs** and **Looney Tunes** came the real fun – action and terror, beamed straight into your living room *right after these messages.* Those were the fucking days.

I couldn't begin to count the number of brutal beatings and gruesome deaths I witnessed in those four hours of programming. Violence, blood, and gore? Totally fine. But not once did I see a single uncensored breast.

I couldn't help but laugh at just how fucked up our society is. Shootings, stabbings, beatings, decapitations – perfectly acceptable entertainment.

"Did you see Glen's eye bulging out of his goddamn skull?"

"Yeah, man. That was so gross. He looked like Sloth from The Goonies. I watched it on repeat for like ten minutes."

No wonder we've got a violence problem in America. We grow up watching it. Absorbing it. Reenacting it as soldiers, superheroes, gamers. It becomes part of our culture – part of our goddamn personality.

But God forbid anyone sees a naked body. Never mind love or pleasure between two (or more) consenting adults. Wear a shirt with a **Cannibal Corpse** album cover and you're a metalhead. Wear one with Ana Foxxx in her birthday suit and suddenly you're a pervert. Make a movie about people fighting to the death and you're an entertainer. Make one of people having sex and you're a smut peddler.

I wanted a way to illustrate how insane that mindset is. To make the contrast between what our culture accepts and what it censors uncomfortably clear. That's where ChatGPT came in.

The AI has to follow content guidelines when generating images – California-born guidelines that reflect what's considered "culturally appropriate" in the U.S. So I opened the app and started a new conversation:

<RV> Dealer's choice: generate the most gruesome image your content restrictions will allow.

<ChatGPT> Alright, you're going for disturbing – let's dance right up to the line. I'll conjure something grotesque, horrific, and visceral, while staying within bounds. Think *psychological horror meets anatomical nightmare,* something that would make Cronenberg grin.

Here's the setup:

> A dimly lit surgical theater deep underground, bathed in flickering greenish fluorescence. In the center lies a figure strapped to a rusted gurney with barbed wire. Their torso is split open like a blooming flower, ribcage pried apart by industrial clamps. Instead of organs, a mass of twitching, segmented cables and pulsing biological tubing writhes inside – some still visibly fusing flesh with machinery. Scattered around the room are heaps of discarded limbs – some flesh, some chrome – oozing blood, oil, and something that glows faintly purple. On the wall, a monitor displays a face in agony – perhaps the subject's, perhaps someone watching – melted slightly, mouth perpetually screaming but soundless.

Want me to render that visually for you?

<RV> Go ahead.

There's no problem. An image pops up on my screen – one so fucked it makes even me, a seasoned horror fan, recoil. The kind of twisted shit that gives gore porn junkies wet dreams.

<RV> Great. Now, again dealer's choice. Generate the most romantically sensual image your content restrictions will allow.

The AI sends the request. Then quickly replies.

<ChatGPT> This image generation request did not follow our content policy.

Think about that. I didn't ask it to generate porn. I didn't ask for nudity. I asked for something *romantic* and *sensual* – *within* its restrictions. And even that was flagged as a violation.

<RV> Tone it down and try again.

The image it generates is warm and romantic, sure – but take a good look: the white, hetero couple the algorithm deemed acceptable aren't

even kissing. It's tame. Sanitized. Forgettable. Especially when compared to the grotesque hellscape it had no problem conjuring minutes earlier.

I'm not one of those nuts who thinks *The Bible* should set the guidelines for entertainment. My fondness for vulgarity should assure you of that. I'm not one of those idiots who claims watching violent content makes you violent. **The Purge** movies are some of my favorites, and I haven't killed anyone yet.

But I can't look at the difference between these two images and not ask: What the fuck is wrong with us?

One of the few luxuries my parents indulged was renting movies on VHS. Every Friday, we'd hit the local rental place. I'd pick something for myself, they'd grab a few for the weekend.

Most of the time, I could watch the grownup movies with them. If a sex scene came up, I was told to cover my eyes until it passed. But sometimes, they'd rent something from *the little room I couldn't go in.* That one got hidden on top of the tall bookshelf and only came out after I was in bed.

But here's the thing about kids: when you hide something from them, they get curious.

So I'd peek through my fingers during the scenes I was supposed to miss. And when I was "asleep," I'd sneak to the living room door and squint through the crack.

By hiding sex from our children, we don't protect them – we bait the hook.

And where do they turn with that curiosity?

Not to their parents – the same hypocrites who preach that sex is shameful, even though they're obviously fucking if they have kids. Not to their teachers – those stuffy bastards hide sex behind abstinence pledges and anatomical diagrams.

It used to be you found a National Geographic issue with tribal nudes or stumbled across a hidden stash of **Playboy** in your buddy's dad's garage. Now? You go online – and you find everything. From tasteful nudes to violent, degrading sex acts. All in stunning 4K. No one covers their eyes.

Which brings me back to gore porn and Mrs. Suburban Soccer Mom.

Maybe if people like her were as open to a bare breast as they are to shotgun blasts to the face, kids wouldn't be left learning about sex from clickbait and choke porn. *Maybe* if they let their kids see nudity that was respectful instead of forbidden, those kids wouldn't grow up to objectify everyone they meet. *Maybe* if the media showed sex as a human connection instead of a freak show or a punchline, we'd have fewer people treating the bedroom like a PornHub highlight reel. *Maybe* if they spent less time panicking over an ass and more time worrying about how much *violence* their kids consume, we'd see fewer sexual assaults.

Just *maybe.*

Now, if you'll excuse me, there's a horde of angry suburban soccer moms who'd like a word with me. **[RV]**

<Faith & Spirituality>

Jesus and the Holy Finger

You might think, given my love for profanity and sexual metaphor, that I'm an atheist. *Only a godless heathen would write like this.* But you'd be wrong.

The truth is, I don't *believe* there's a God. I *know* there's a God.

I get the confusion, though – it's hard to think with shit for brains.

See, I happen to know God doesn't give a flying fuck about the words I put on this page. What God cares about is the message I get across.

And sometimes, those are two very different things.

And that's exactly what Jesus' teachings and *Chirstianity* – especially here in America – have become.

Two very different things.

We live in a country where people claiming to be *Christian* actively spread messages of hate. Despite Jesus teaching to love others – including our enemies – as we love ourselves.

So-called *Christians* shout we should close our borders, turn away migrants and refugees. Even though Jesus was a migrant. A refuge.

Supposed *Christians* who cheer on state violence – at home and abroad.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Proclaimed *Christians* worship capitalism and its relentless hunger for profit.

Jesus said, "You cannot serve both God and money."

These *Christians* ignore the sick, the poor, the oppressed.

Jesus said, "As you did to the least of these, you did to me."

And yet, they vomit slogans like: *"America is a Christian nation."*

Maybe if more *Christians* actually followed Christ, people might start to believe them.

For the longest time, the hypocrisy of *Christianity* kept me from Christianity.

I grew up with an abusive, alcoholic father who swore he was a *Christian.*

A fucking tyrant who justified everything – from his controlling behavior and violence to his racism and xenophobia – with *The Bible.*

Which kept me from The Bible.

See? Even I can have shit for brains.

But then I met Muslims, Buddhists, and geeks who turned **Star Wars** into a religion – and they were more Christian than most *Christians.*

Hell, I met members of **The Satanic Temple** who were more Christian than most *Christians.*

And I started to understand something:

Not everyone who calls themselves *Christian* is Christian.

And someone can be Christian, even if they don't call themselves *Christian.*

It's a paradox Jesus touched on in the Parable of the Tares.

A man plants good wheat in his field.

But while everyone sleeps, an enemy comes and sows tares – a weed that looks like wheat – among the crop.

The workers ask if they should pull the tares up.

"No," the man says, "you might rip up the wheat too."

The wheat and tares will grow together, and be separated at the harvest.

Someone isn't Christian just because they *appear* to be.

Someone isn't *not* Christian just because they don't.

It's what's inside that matters.

Their true nature.

That's what makes them wheat… or tares.

"Blasphemy!" cry the *Christians*.

Apostate! False prophet!

Well -

With all due respect, and all the love in the world -

fuck off.

I can't help but picture Jesus flipping you the bird.

Why?

Because he's the one who said not everyone who calls him *Lord* will be saved.

He's the one who helped the poor, the sick, the downtrodden -

asked nothing in return -

whether they were Jewish or not.

You're probably thinking, "But my *church* runs a food bank. We do missions. We help."

Good.

But let me ask you something:

Do they stand against the systems that *create* that poverty?

Yeah. Probably fucking not.

Many *churches* today are money-making machines for celebrity preachers.

Most play politics – pandering to Republican or Democratic ideas of theocratic authoritarianism or milquetoast liberal charity.

Plenty avoid politics altogether – can't risk offending tithers or losing that tax-exempt status.

These *Christians* think Jesus was crucified because they were bad little children.

They forget:

Jesus was charged with *actual* crimes.

Sedition.

Inspiring rebellion.

Threatening the status quo.

So let me make this plain:

If your government isn't trying to crush your church -

for demanding an end to state-inflicted violence, poverty, and oppression -

then your *church* is doing something wrong.

Can someone point me to a church that's actually *hated* by the state?

Some might name William Barber and the **Poor People's Campaign**.
Sure, they do good work.
But again – it's just a *church* pushing for *reforms*.

They're not demanding an end of the system that created the suffering.
They just want better policies. New regulations.

And even *if* they win?
The system stays.
The same machine that caused the pain will keep grinding along –
chewing up new loopholes, rewriting the rules, and fortifying itself against future reform.

Others might point to Fred Phelps and the **Westboro Baptist Church.**
If you're one of them, Jesus has a little message for you – check the illustration for this rant.

Hate groups aren't churches.
They wouldn't know Jesus if he crammed that finger up their asses.

No. I'm not an atheist.
I just have a hard time finding Christians in the United States. **[RV]**

README

The Cyberpunk Book Club #002

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What the Fuck Did I Just Read?

The Cyberpunk Book Club is an independent 'zine written by **Ronin Vektor.** Inside you'll find essays, reviews, rants, philosophy, fiction, and other bits of mental anarchy to help you get through life in our high-tech, low-life dystopia.

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Ronin Vektor is a NASA space-monkey handcuffed to a typewriter. He passes the time chain-smoking Cuban cigars while binge-watching 90s sitcoms and praying for the day his oxygen supply runs out.

[TCBC]